

June 16, 1943, letter from B.A. Botkin to Willis Laurence James

June 16, 1943 Dr. Willis Laurence James The Fort Valley State College Fort Valley, Georgia

Dear Dr. James:

I am glad to have your letter, from which I assume that the sapphire needles reached you. The records I refer to as possibilities for rerecording are the 8 which you and Lewis Jones made at the Festival; copies of these are with Dr. Bond, and could be played back by you to determine which you want to do over. I suggest that you rerecord Buster Ezell's Roosevelt and Hitler and Joe Louis and Buster Brown's War Song which are marred by blasting and tangled threads. In the Washboard Band record, Southern Rag, you will note that there is a lack of balance between the voice and the band. Your suggestion that you record unaccompanied singing is a good one (I am also anxious to have the texts for all the first 8 recordings and the ones to come). By the same token, I should like some instrumental and band pieces recorded without singing, unless you can get just the right balance between voice and instruments.

I am enclosing a list of records made by John Work at Fort Valley in 1941. Will you please return this list to me when you are through with it? We can use it as a basis for a new list for rerecording. At this writing, I suggest that you give special attention to the secular songs. We can talk about the spirituals later.

With best wishes,

Faithfully, B. A. Botkin Assistant in Charge Archive of American Folk Song

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* I am thinking in terms of possible pressings for our record albums.